

1. Where can I get my (or my child's) immunization records?

There is no central repository of vaccination records. The only records that exist are the ones you or your parents were given when the vaccines were administered and the ones in the medical record of the doctor or clinic where the vaccines were given. Sometimes schools hold the vaccination records of children who attended, but these records are usually not kept for more than a year or two.

If you cannot locate your personal record or the record from your doctor, it may be necessary to repeat some of the vaccines or arrange blood tests to determine your immunity.

2. Where can I look for existing immunization records?

Children's records

- Try calling your [local or state health department](#)'s immunization program.
- Sometimes schools hold the vaccination records of children who attended, but these records are generally not kept for more than a year or two or, at the longest, until graduation. After a student graduates, records are sent to storage and may not be accessible.
- Look for family records such as a baby book.
- Check for records with your doctor or public health clinic. Please keep in mind, however, that immunization records are maintained for a limited number of years, and then usually only by the medical provider who actually administered the vaccines.

College students

- Many colleges provide vaccinations (often, certain vaccinations are required for enrollment). Contact your college's medical services department (student health) for further information.

Military personnel

- Check your military records.

3. Should I track my (or my child's) vaccinations?

Yes, you really should create and keep these records. In most states, it is the responsibility of the parents of school-aged children, not family doctors, to provide vaccination records to the health department and to schools.

Today we move, travel, and change health providers more than we did in previous generations. Also, doctor's offices and clinics store records of children's vaccinations and the dates they were received only for a few years. If you keep an accurate record, you will be more likely to remember when to bring your children in for the next visit. These records also can prove that your children are

up to date with their immunizations. In most states, children are not allowed to enter school or childcare unless they can prove that they meet all [school immunization requirements](#).

Your doctor or clinic will be happy to give you an immunization record form for your use. Bring this record with you whenever you take your child to the doctor or clinic, and ask the doctor to sign and date the form each time a vaccination is given. That way, you can be sure that the immunization information is current and correct.

Finally, make sure you know if your doctor participates in an [immunization registry](#). However, keep in mind that very few registries existed prior to the mid-1990s.

4. What are Immunization Registries and who benefits from them?

[Immunization registries](#) are computerized information systems that collect vaccination histories and help ensure correct and timely immunizations, especially for children.

Healthcare Providers use registries to

- obtain a complete, accurate immunization history for a new or continuing patient
- produce official immunization records
- reduce paperwork
- manage vaccine inventories
- introduce new vaccines or changes in the vaccination schedule
- help interpret the complex immunization schedule
- provide coverage data for health insurance plans and other national organizations

Communities use registries to

- identify populations at high risk for vaccine preventable diseases
- target immunization interventions and resources efficiently

Parents working with their healthcare providers, can use registries systems to

- be notified when immunizations are due or late
- obtain an accurate, official immunization history for personal use and for daycare, school, or camp entry requirements
- consolidate records for all immunizations a child has received
- help ensure that a child's immunizations are up to date
- help ensure timely immunization for children if families move or switch healthcare providers
- prevent unnecessary (duplicative) immunization

Note: No universal registry system now exists. Registries in one state or area may not be compatible with other registries, and information may have to be manually transferred from registry to registry. Also, to protect personal information in registries, this information cannot be directly retrieved by individuals.

To learn more about Immunization Registries and ensuring the confidentiality of registry information, consult the Immunization Registries area of the National Immunization Program's web site at:

<http://www.cdc.gov/nip/registry/ir.htm>

5. Why doesn't the Immunization Registry system provide quick universal access to individual records?

Although many individual health practices and health plans use information systems to track patient immunizations, these site- or plan-specific registries include only immunizations administered by participating providers to covered patients. At this time, no single registry can provide information for all children and all doses of vaccines administered by all providers, and no registry can be accessible to all providers and parents. Federal regulations to ensure the confidentiality of these medical records also prevent or discourage national central storage and direct access to health records, including immunization records. States and areas that administer immunization registries also enforce standards and procedures to protect confidentiality and to secure stored information, particularly electronic information. Consequently, regulations for information access and retrieval vary by state and location.